The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1.   A method for providing a notification that a request to initiate an instant messaging conversation has been received, comprising:

receiving said request to initiate an instant messaging conversation; and

in response to receiving said request, displaying a notification window comprising an identification of an instant messaging user associated with said request and a topic for said instant messaging conversation.

2.   The method of Claim 1, wherein displaying said notification window comprises gradually displaying said notification window.

3.   The method of Claim 2, wherein said notification window is displayed proximate to an icon associated with an instant messaging client application.

4.   The method of Claim 2, wherein said notification window is displayed proximate to an icon associated with said request to initiate an instant messaging conversation.

5.   The method of Claim 3, wherein said icon is displayed in a task bar located along one edge of a user interface desktop.

6.   The method of Claim 4, wherein said icon is displayed in a task bar located along one edge of a user interface desktop.

5.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

determining whether a request has been received to respond to said request to initiate an instant messaging conversation; and

in response to determining that said request has not been received within a predetermined amount of time, removing said notification window.

6.   The method of Claim 5, wherein removing said notification window comprises gradually removing said notification window.

7.   The method of Claim 6, wherein said request to respond to said request to initiate an instant messaging conversation is initiated by selecting said identification of said instant messaging user associated with said request or said topic for said instant messaging conversation.

8.   The method of Claim 7, wherein said identification of said instant messaging user associated with said request and said topic for said instant messaging conversation may be selected until said notification window is completely removed.

9.   The method of Claim 5, further comprising:

in response to determining that said request has been received within a predetermined amount of time, initiating an instant messaging conversation with said user associated with said request.

10.   A method for providing a notification that an instant message has been received, comprising:

receiving said instant message;

in response to receiving said instant message, displaying a notification window comprising an identification of an instant messaging user associated with said instant message and said instant message.

11.   The method of Claim 10, wherein displaying said notification window comprises gradually displaying said notification window.

12.   The method of Claim 11, wherein said notification window is displayed proximate to an icon associated with an instant messaging client application.

13. The method of Claim 11, wherein said notification window is displayed proximate to an icon associated with said instant messaging user.

14. The method of Claim 10, further comprising:

determining whether said instant message is intended for an instant messaging client application window that is not a visible window or that is not a foreground window; and

in response to determining that said instant message is intended for a non-visible or non-foreground window, displaying said notification window as a visible foreground window.

15. The method of Claim 14, further comprising scrolling said instant message in said in an icon associated with said instant messaging user.

16. The method of Claim 14, further comprising:

determining whether a request to reply to said instant message was received within a predetermined amount of time; and

in response to determining that said request was not received, gradually removing said notification window.

17. The method of Claim 16, further comprising:

in response to determining that said request was received, making a window associated with an instant messaging client application an active foreground window.

18. A method for providing a notification that an instant message has been received from a business partner computer, comprising:

receiving said instant message;

in response to receiving said instant message, displaying a notification window comprising an identification of a business partner associated with said instant message and said instant message.

19. The method of Claim 18, wherein said notification window comprises gradually displaying said notification window.

20. The method of Claim 19, further comprising:

directing a web browser to a web site associated with said business partner in response to the selection of said identification of said business partner or said instant message.

21. The method of Claim 20, further comprising:

determining whether a selection of said identification of said business partner or said instant message was received within a predetermined amount of time; and

in response to determining that said selection was not received, gradually removing said notification window.

22. The method of Claim 21, wherein said identification of said business partner or said instant message may be selected until said notification window has been completely removed.

23. A computer-readable medium comprising instructions that, when executed by a computer, will cause the computer to perform the method of Claim 1.

24. A computer-controlled apparatus capable of performing the method of Claim 1.